



## 1. Create a plan | 2. Prepare an emergency kit | 3. Listen for information

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March 2005

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services urges residents to take just an hour out of their busy schedules during the month of March to make a family emergency plan and prepare an emergency kit. The department reminds Missourians that emergencies could affect anyone. Tornadoes, fires, floods, storms, power outages, or even terrorist attacks can leave little time to gather the essentials needed if you must leave your home, and residents might not have enough supplies on hand if they must remain in their home for several days. By assuring that supplies such as adequate water, nutritional foods, and essential medications are available, families can maintain their health and well-being throughout an emergency.

“March is designated as Preparedness Month, and this marks the beginning of severe weather season,” said Julia Eckstein, director of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. “This is a good time to talk about your family’s plan and put together the supplies that may be needed in the event of any type of emergency situation.”

The department’s recommendation is part of its *Ready in 3* emergency preparedness initiative to remind Missourians of what they can do at home, school, and work to prepare for emergencies.

While some Missourians have not yet taken the time to put together a plan, others are taking preparedness quite seriously. In March of last year, a tornado ripped through Chillicothe destroying many homes and leaving an eight-mile path of destruction. Jim Lightner and his family know firsthand how important it is to prepare in advance of any emergency situation. Their home was destroyed by the tornado that left him and his wife living in a motel for weeks. “I work for the Sheriff’s Department and am trained to respond and react to many different emergency situations. You never think it will happen to you and one day a year ago it did happen to us, but we did have a family plan and knew where to go and how to contact each other,” said Jim. When Jim and his wife move into their new home, one of the first things that will be in place is an emergency kit with a battery-powered radio, flashlight, water, batteries, and emergency food in the event of another such tragedy.

“These types of emergencies can change lives significantly. That’s why we are urging families, communities, businesses, and schools to take steps today to prepare for all types of emergencies,” Eckstein said. The department recommends checking and changing batteries in flashlights and radios, and replacing water every six months. Also, check the expiration dates on any food, and replace items past their due dates.

The *Ready in 3* program is part of DHSS’ ongoing effort to improve the state’s ability to respond to a public health emergency or biological, chemical, or nuclear event. The department is working with other state agencies, local public health agencies, meteorologists, schools, community groups, and the American Red Cross to raise awareness across the state and ensure that we are all better prepared for an emergency.

“Our challenge is convincing Missourians that every individual, every family, every household has a critical role to play in emergency preparedness. Prepared Missourians increases the effectiveness of the response to any disaster,” added Eckstein.

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More than 820 public and parochial schools throughout Missouri are participating in the program during March and will be providing Family Safety Guides to their students. Teachers are using the booklet as a teaching tool, and many schools are planning special preparedness activities during March - designated as preparedness month. Fox Elementary in Arnold, Missouri is using the Family Safety Guide emergency kit checklist to stock emergency bags for each classroom. "We have to make sure our students are safe and our school is prepared in the event of such a tragedy. *Ready in 3* is an excellent resource for all Missourians," said Lisa Zell, assistant principal for Fox Elementary in Arnold, Missouri.

Disasters can happen at anytime or any place, and *Ready in 3* provides three simple steps to prepare for an emergency situation:

1. **Create a plan for you, your family, and your business.** Your family might not be together when emergency happens. That's why it is important to have a plan in place. Talk about how you will reach each other in different situations. Make sure everyone in the family can get to a safe place and find each other in the event of an emergency. For instance, it is a great idea to designate two family meeting places, one in the neighborhood and one farther away, and to select two emergency contacts including one out-of-state contact, in case local phone lines are jammed.
2. **Prepare an emergency kit for your home, car, and at work.** If an emergency happens, you might not be able to get food or water for days or even weeks, and your electricity may not be working. The following items should be part of your emergency kit and kept in a container that can be easily carried:
  - Water and canned or dried food - families should set aside one gallon of water per person per day, to last three days, and a three-day supply of food per person. The food should be nonperishable items that don't need there's an infant in the house, include formula and baby food.
  - Battery powered radio
  - Flashlight
  - Extra batteries for the radio and flashlight
  - Prescription medications
  - First-aid kit
3. **Listen for information about what to do and where to go during an actual emergency.** City, county, and state officials have developed emergency plans. In the event of an actual emergency, it's important to follow their instructions and advice.

The *Ready in 3* Family Safety Guide explains these steps in more detail and provides an emergency kit checklist. The booklet is free and available in English, Spanish, Bosnian, and Braille. Missouri residents are urged to order a copy of the booklet on-line at [www.dhss.mo.gov](http://www.dhss.mo.gov) or by calling the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at 573-751-6062.

### **In Missouri You Can Be *Ready in 3***

To order *Ready in 3* materials,

call 573.751.6062

**-or-**

online at [www.dhss.mo.gov/BT\\_Response/readyform\\_2.html](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/BT_Response/readyform_2.html)